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The Last Chronicle of Barset

BY

ANTHONY TROLLOPE.

With Illustrations by G. H. Thomas

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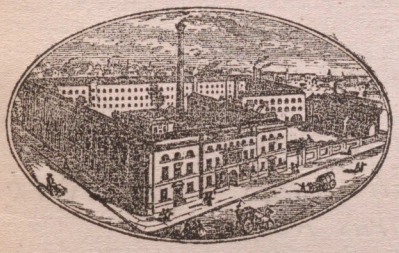

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THE LAST DENIAL.

CHAPTER LXXVI.

I THINK HE IS LIGHT OF HEART.

MRS. ARABIN remained one day in town. Mr. Toogood, in spite of his asseveration that he would not budge from Barchester till he had seen Mr. Crawley through all his troubles, did run up to London as soon as the news reached him that John Eames had returned. He came up and took Mrs. Arabin's deposition, which he sent down to Mr. Walker. It might still be necessary, Mrs. Arabin was told, that she should go into court, and there state on oath that she had given the cheque to Mr. Crawley; but Mr. Walker was of opinion that the circumstances would enable the judge to call upon the grand jury not to find a true bill against Mr. Crawley, and that the whole affair, as far as Mr. Crawley was concerned, would thus be brought to an end. Toogood was still very anxious to place Dan Stringer in the dock, but Mr. Walker declared that they would fail if they made the attempt. Dan had been examined before the magistrates at Barchester, and had persisted in his statement that he had heard nothing about Mr. Crawley and the cheque. This he said in the teeth of the words which had fallen from him unawares in the presence of Mr. Toogood. But they could not punish him for a lie,—not even for such a lie as that! He was not upon oath, and they could not make him responsible to the law because he had held his tongue upon a matter as to which it was manifest to them all that he had known the whole history during the entire period of Mr. Crawley's persecution. They could only call upon him to account for his possession of the cheque, and this he did by saying it had been paid to him by Jem Scuttle, who received all moneys

appertaining to the hotel stables, and accounted for them once a week. Jem Scuttle had simply told him that he had taken the cheque from Mr. Soames, and Jem had since gone to New Zealand. It was quite true that Jem's departure had followed suspiciously close upon the payment of the rent to Mrs. Arabin, and that Jem had been in close amity with Dan Stringer up to the moment of his departure. That Dan Stringer had not become honestly possessed of the cheque, everybody knew; but, nevertheless, the magistrates were of opinion, Mr. Walker coinciding with them, that there was no evidence against him sufficient to secure a conviction. The story, however, of Mr. Crawley's injuries was so well known in Barchester, and the feeling against the man who had permitted him to be thus injured was so strong, that Dan Stringer did not altogether escape without punishment. Some rough spirits in Barchester called one night at "The Dragon of Wantly," and begged that Mr. Dan Stringer would be kind enough to come out and take a walk with them that evening; and when it was intimated to them that Dan Stringer had not just then any desire for such exercise, they requested to be allowed to go into the back parlour and make an evening with Dan Stringer in that recess. There was a terrible row at "The Dragon of Wantly" that night, and Dan with difficulty was rescued by the police. On the following morning he was smuggled out of Barchester by an early train, and has never more been seen in that city. Rumours of him, however, were soon heard, from which it appeared that he had made himself acquainted with the casual ward of more than one workhouse in London. His cousin John left the inn almost immediately,—as, indeed, he must have done had there been no question of Mr. Soames's cheque,—and then there was nothing more heard of the Stringers in Barchester.

Mrs. Arabin remained in town one day, and would have remained longer, waiting for her husband, had not a letter from his sister impressed upon her that it might be as well that she should be with their father as soon as possible. "I don't mean to make you think that there is any immediate danger," Mrs. Grantly said, "and, indeed, we cannot say that he is ill; but it seems that the extremity of old age has come upon him almost suddenly, and that he is as weak as a child. His only delight is with the children, especially with Posy, whose gravity in her management of him is wonderful. He has not left his room now for more than a week, and he eats very little. It may be that he will live yet for years; but I should be deceiving you if I did not let you know that both the archdeacon and I think that the time of his departure from us is near at hand." After reading this letter,

Mrs. Arabin could not wait in town for her husband, even though he was expected in two days, and though she had been told that her presence at Barchester was not immediately required on behalf of Mr. Crawley.

But during that one day she kept her promise to John Eames by going to Lily Dale. Mrs. Arabin had become very fond of Johnny, and felt that he deserved the prize which he had been so long trying to win. The reader, perhaps, may not agree with Mrs. Arabin. The reader, who may have caught a closer insight into Johnny's character than Mrs. Arabin had obtained, may, perhaps, think that a young man who could amuse himself with Miss Demolines was unworthy of Lily Dale. If so, I may declare for myself that I and the reader are not in accord about John Eames. It is hard to measure worth and worthlessness in such matters, as there is no standard for such measurement. My old friend John was certainly no hero,—was very unheroic in many phases of his life; but then, if all the girls are to wait for heroes, I fear that the difficulties in the way of matrimonial arrangements, great as they are at present, will be very seriously enhanced. Johnny was not ecstatic, nor heroic, nor transcendental, nor very beautiful in his manliness; he was not a man to break his heart for love, or to have his story written in an epic; but he was an affectionate, kindly, honest young man; and I think most girls might have done worse than take him. Whether he was wise to ask assistance in his love-making so often as he had done, that may be another question.

Mrs. Arabin was intimately acquainted with Mrs. Thorne, and therefore there was nothing odd in her going to Mrs. Thorne's house. Mrs. Thorne was very glad to see her, and told her all the Barsetshire news,—much more than Mrs. Arabin would have learned in a week at the deanery; for Mrs. Thorne had a marvellous gift of picking up news. She had already heard the whole story of Mr. Soames's cheque, and expressed her conviction that the least that could be done in amends to Mr. Crawley was to make him a bishop. "And you see the palace is vacant," said Mrs. Thorne.

"The palace vacant!" said Mrs. Arabin.

"It is just as good. Now that Mrs. Proudie has gone I don't suppose the poor bishop will count for much. I can assure you, Mrs. Arabin, I felt that poor woman's death so much! She used to regard me as one of the staunchest of the Proudieites! She once whispered to me such a delightfully wicked story about the dean and the archdeacon. When I told her that they were my particular friends, she put on a look of horror. But I don't think she believed me." Then Emily Dunstable entered the room, and with her came Lily Dale. Mrs. Arabin had

never before seen Lily, and of course they were introduced. "I am sorry to say Miss Dale is going home to Allington to-morrow," said Emily. "But she is coming to Chaldicotes in May," said Mrs. Thorne. "Of course, Mrs. Arabin, you know what gala doings we are going to have in May?" Then there were various civil little speeches made on each side, and Mrs. Arabin expressed a wish that she might meet Miss Dale again in Barsetshire. But all this did not bring her at all nearer to her object.

"I particularly wish to say a word to Miss Dale,—here to-day, if she will allow me," said Mrs. Arabin.

"I'm sure she will,—twenty words; won't you, Lily?" said Mrs. Thorne, preparing to leave the room. Then Mrs. Arabin apologized, and Mrs. Thorne, bustling up, said that it did not signify, and Lily, remaining quite still on the sofa, wondered what it was all about,—and in two minutes Lily and Mrs. Arabin were alone together. Lily had just time to surmise that Mrs. Arabin's visit must have some reference to Mr. Crosbie,—remembering that Crosbie had married his wife out of Barsetshire, and forgetting altogether that Mrs. Arabin had been just brought home from Italy by John Eames.

"I am afraid, Miss Dale, you will think me very impertinent," said Mrs. Arabin.

"I am sure I shall not think that," said Lily.

"I believe you knew, before Mr. Eames started, that he was going to Italy to find me and my husband?" said Mrs. Arabin. Then Lily put Mr. Crosbie altogether out of her head, and became aware that he was not to be the subject of the coming conversation. She was almost sorry that it was so. There was no doubt in her mind as to what she would have said to any one who might have taken up Crosbie's cause. On that matter she could now have given a very decisive answer in a few words. But on that other matter she was much more in doubt. She remembered, however, every word of the note she had received from M. D. She remembered also the words of John's note to that young woman. And her heart was still hard against him. "Yes," she said; "Mr. Eames came here one night and told us why he was going. I was very glad that he was going, because I thought it was right."

"You know, of course, how successful he has been? It was I who gave the cheque to Mr. Crawley."

"So Mrs. Thorne has heard. Dr. Thorne has written to tell her the whole story."

"And now I've come to look for Mr. Eames's reward."

"His reward, Mrs. Arabin?"

"Yes; or rather to plead for him. You will not, I hope, be angry with him because he has told me much of his history while we were travelling home alone together."

"Oh, no," said Lily, smiling. "How could he have chosen a better friend in whom to trust?"

"He could certainly have chosen none who would take his part more sincerely. He is so good and so amiable! He is so pleasant in his ways, and so fitted to make a woman happy! And then, Miss Dale, he is also so devoted!"

"He is an old friend of ours, Mrs. Arabin."

"So he has told me."

"And we all of us love him dearly. Mamma is very much attached to him."

"Unless he flatters himself, there is no one belonging to you who would not wish that he should be nearer and dearer still."

"It may be so. I do not say that it is not so. Mamma and my uncle are both fond of him."

"And does not that go a long way?" said Mrs. Arabin.

"It ought not to do so," said Lily. "It ought not to go any way at all."

"Ought it not? It seems to me that I could never have brought myself to marry any one whom my old friends had not liked."

"Ah! that is another thing."

"But is it not a recommendation to a man that he has been so successful with your friends as to make them all feel that you might trust yourself to him with perfect safety?" To this Lily made no answer, and Mrs. Arabin went on to plead her friend's cause with all the eloquence she could use, insisting on all his virtues, his good temper, his kindness, his constancy,—and not forgetting the fact that the world was inclined to use him very well. Still Lily made no answer. She had promised Mrs. Arabin that she would not regard her interference as impertinent, and therefore she refrained from any word that might seem to show offence. Nor did she feel offence. It was something gained by John Eames in Lily's estimation that he should have such a friend as Mrs. Arabin to take an interest in his welfare. But there was a self-dependence, perhaps one may call it an obstinacy about Lily Dale, which made her determined that she would not be driven hither or thither by any pressure from without. Why had John Eames, at the very moment when he should have been doing his best to drive from her breast the memory of past follies,—when he would have striven to do so had he

really been earnest in his suit,—why at such a moment had he allowed himself to correspond in terms of affection with such a woman as this M. D.? While Mrs. Arabin was pleading for John Eames, Lily was repeating to herself certain words which John had written to the woman —"Ever and always yours unalterably." Such were not the exact words, but such was the form in which Lily, dishonestly, chose to repeat them to herself. And why was it so with her? In the old days she would have forgiven Crosbie any offence at a word or a look,—any possible letter to any M. D., let her have been ever so abominable! Nay,—had she not even forgiven him the offence of deserting herself altogether on behalf of a woman as detestable as could be any M. D. of Johnny's choosing;—a woman whose only recommendation had been her title? And yet she would not forgive John Eames, though the evidence against him was of so flimsy a nature,—but rather strove to turn the flimsiness of that evidence into strength! Why was it so? Unheroic as he might be, John Eames was surely a better man and a bigger man than Adolphus Crosbie. It was simply this;—she had fallen in love with the one, and had never fallen in love with the other! She had fallen in love with the one man, though in her simple way she had made a struggle against such feeling; and she had not come to love the other man, though she had told herself that it would be well that she should do so if it were possible. Again and again she had half declared to herself that she would take him as her husband and leave the love to come afterwards; but when the moment came for doing so, she could not do it.

"May I not say a word of comfort to him?" said Mrs. Arabin.

"He will be very comfortable without any such word," said Lily, laughing.

"But he is not comfortable; of that you may be very sure." "Yours ever and unalterably, J. E.," said Lily to herself. "You do not doubt his affection?" continued Mrs Arabin.

"I neither doubt it nor credit it."

"Then I think you wrong him. And the reason why I have ventured to come to you is that you may know the impression which he has made upon one who was but the other day a stranger to him. I am sure that he loves you."

"I think he is light of heart."

"Oh, no, Miss Dale."

"And how am I to become his wife unless I love him well enough myself? Mrs. Arabin, I have made up my mind about it. I shall never become any man's wife. Mamma and I are all in all together, and we

shall remain together." As soon as these words were out of her mouth, she hated herself for having spoken them. There was a maudlin, missish, namby-mamby sentimentality about them which disgusted her. She specially desired to be straightforward, resolute of purpose, honest-spoken, and free from all touch of affectation. And yet she had excused herself from marrying John Eames after the fashion of a sick school-girl. "It is no good talking about it any more," she said, getting up from her chair quickly.

"You are not angry with me;—or at any rate you will forgive me?"

"I'm quite sure you have meant to be very good, and I am not a bit angry."

"And you will see him before you go?"

"Oh, yes; that is if he likes to come to-day, or early to-morrow. I go home to-morrow. I cannot refuse him, because he is such an old friend,—almost like a brother. But it is of no use, Mrs. Arabin." Then Mrs. Arabin kissed her and left her, telling her that Mr. Eames would come to her that afternoon at half-past five. Lily promised that she would be at home to receive him.

"Won't you ride with us for the last time?" said Emily Dunstable when Lily gave notice that she would not want the horse on that afternoon.

"No; not to-day."

"You'll never have another opportunity of riding with Emily Dunstable," said the bride elect;—"at least I hope not."

"Even under those circumstances I must refuse, though I would give a guinea to be with you. John Eames is coming here to say good-by."

"Oh; then indeed you must not come with us. Lily, what will you say to him?"

"Nothing."

"Oh, Lily, think of it."

"I have thought of it. I have thought of nothing else. I am tired of thinking of it. It is not good to think of anything so much. What does it matter?"

"It is very good to have some one to love one better than all the world besides."

"I have some one," said Lily, thinking of her mother, but not caring to descend again to the mawkish weakness of talking about her.

"Yes; but some one to be always with you, to do everything for you, to be your very own."

"It is all very well for you," said Lily, "and I think that Bernard

is the luckiest fellow in the world; but it will not do for me. I know in what college I'll take my degree, and I wish they'd let me write the letters after my name as the men do."

"What letters, Lily?"

"O.M., for Old Maid. I don't see why it shouldn't be as good as B.A. for Bachelor of Arts. It would mean a great deal more."

CHAPTER LXXVII.

THE SHATTERED TREE.

When Mrs. Arabin saw Johnny in the middle of that day, she could hardly give him much encouragement. And yet she felt by no means sure that he might not succeed even yet. Lily had been very positive in her answers, and yet there had been something, either in her words or in the tone of her voice, which had made Mrs. Arabin feel that even Lily was not quite sure of herself. There was still room for relenting. Nothing, however, had been said which could justify her in bidding John Eames simply "to go in and win." "I think he is light of heart," Lily had said. Those were the words which, of all that had been spoken, most impressed themselves on Mrs. Arabin's memory. She would not repeat them to her friend, but she would graft upon them such advice as she had to give him.

And this she did, telling him that she thought that perhaps Lily doubted his actual earnestness. "I would marry her this moment," said Johnny. But that was not enough, as Mrs. Arabin knew, to prove his earnestness. Many men, fickle as weathercocks, are ready to marry at the moment,—are ready to marry at the moment, because they are fickle, and think so little about it. "But she hears, perhaps, of your liking other people," said Mrs. Arabin. "I don't care a straw for any other person," said Johnny. "I wonder whether if I was to shut myself up in a cage for six months, it would do any good?" "If she had the keeping of the cage, perhaps it might," said Mrs. Arabin. She had nothing more to say to him on that subject, but to tell him that Miss Dale would expect him that afternoon at half-past five. "I told her that you would come to wish her good-by, and she promised to see you."

"I wish she'd say she wouldn't see me. Then there would be some chance," said Johnny.

Between him and Mrs. Arabin the parting was very affectionate. She told him how thankful she was for his kindness in coming to her, and how grateful she would ever be,—and the dean also,—for his attention to her. "Remember, Mr. Eames, that you will always be most welcome at the deanery of Barchester. And I do hope that before long you may be there with your wife." And so they parted.

He left her at about two, and went to Mr. Toogood's office in Bedford Row. He found his uncle, and the two went out to lunch together in Holborn. Between them there was no word said about Lily Dale, and John was glad to have some other subject in his mind for half an hour. Toogood was full of his triumph about Mr. Crawley and of his successes in Barsetshire. He gave John a long account of his visit to Plumstead, and expressed his opinion that if all clergymen were like the archdeacon there would not be so much room for Dissenters. "I've seen a good many parsons in my time," said Toogood; "but I don't think I ever saw such a one as him. You know he is a clergyman somehow, and he never lets you forget it; but that's about all. Most of 'em are never contented without choking you with their white cravats all the time you're with 'em. As for Crawley himself," Mr. Toogood continued, "he's not like anybody else that ever was born, saint or sinner, parson or layman. I never heard of such a man in all my experience. Though he knew where he got the cheque as well as I know it now, he wouldn't say so, because the dean had said it wasn't so. Somebody ought to write a book about it,—indeed they ought." Then he told the whole story of Dan Stringer, and how he had found Dan out, looking at the top of Dan's hat through the little aperture in the wall of the inn parlour. "When I saw the twitch in his hat, John, I knew he had handled the cheque himself. I don't mean to say that I'm sharper than another man, and I don't think so; but I do mean to say that when you are in any difficulty of that sort, you ought to go to a lawyer. It's his business, and a man does what is his business with patience and perseverance. It's a pity, though, that that scoundrel should get off." Then Eames gave his uncle an account of his Italian trip, to and fro, and was congratulated also upon his success. John's great triumph lay in the fact that he had been only two nights in bed, and that he would not have so far condescended on those occasions but for the feminine weakness of his fellow-traveller. "We shan't forget it all in a hurry,—shall we, John?" said Mr. Toogood, in a pleasant voice, as they parted at the door of the luncheon-house in Holborn. Toogood was returning to his office, and John Eames was to prepare himself for his last attempt.

He went home to his lodgings, intending at first to change his dress,—to make himself smart for the work before him,—but after standing for a moment or two leaning on the chest of drawers in his bed-room, he gave up this idea. "After all that's come and gone," he said to himself, "if I cannot win her as I am now, I cannot win her at all." And then he swore to himself a solemn oath, resolving that he would repeat the purport of it to Lily herself,—that this should be the last attempt. "What's the use of it? Everybody ridicules me. And I am ridiculous. I am an ass. It's all very well wanting to be prime minister; but if you can't be prime minister, you must do without being prime minister." Then he attempted to sing the old song—"Shall I, sighing in despair, die because a woman's fair? If she be not fair for me, what care I how fair she be?" But he did care, and he told himself that the song did him no good. As it was not time for him as yet to go to Lily, he threw himself on the sofa, and strove to read a book. Then all the weary nights of his journey prevailed over him, and he fell asleep.

When he awoke it wanted a quarter to six. He sprang up, and rushing out, jumped into a cab. "Berkeley Square,—as hard as you can go," he said. "Number —." He thought of Rosalind, and her counsels to lovers as to the keeping of time, and reflected that in such an emergency as his, he might really have ruined himself by that unfortunate slumber. When he got to Mrs. Thorne's door he knocked hurriedly, and bustled up to the drawing-room as though everything depended on his saving a minute. "I'm afraid I'm ever so much behind my time," he said.

"It does not matter in the least," said Lily. "As Mrs. Arabin said that perhaps you might call, I would not be out of the way. I supposed that Sir Raffle was keeping you and that you wouldn't come."

"Sir Raffle was not keeping me. I fell asleep. That is the truth of it."

"I am so sorry that you should have been disturbed!"

"Do not laugh at me, Lily,—to-day. I had been travelling a good deal, and I suppose I was tired."

"I won't laugh at you," she said, and of a sudden her eyes became full of tears,—she did not know why. But there they were, and she was ashamed to put up her handkerchief, and she could not bring herself to turn away her face, and she had no resource but that he should see them.

"Lily!" he said.

"What a paladin you have been, John, rushing all about Europe on your friend's behalf!"

"Don't talk about that."

"And such a successful paladin too! Why am I not to talk about it? I am going home to-morrow, and I mean to talk about nothing else for a week. I am so very, very, very glad that you have saved your cousin." Then she did put up her handkerchief, making believe that her tears had been due to Mr. Crawley. But John Eames knew better than that.

"Lily," he said, "I've come for the last time. It sounds as though I meant to threaten you; but you won't take it in that way. I think you will know what I mean. I have come for the last time—to ask you to be my wife." She had got up to greet him when he entered, and they were both still standing. She did not answer him at once, but turning away from him walked towards the window. "You knew why I was coming to-day, Lily?"

"Mrs. Arabin told me. I could not be away when you were coming, but perhaps it would have been better."

"Is it so? Must it be so? Must you say that to me, Lily? Think of it for a moment, dear."

"I have thought of it."

"One word from you, yes or no, spoken now is to be everything to me for always. Lily, cannot you say yes?" She did not answer him, but walked further away from him to another window. "Try to say yes. Look round at me with one look that may only half mean it;—that may tell me that it shall not positively be no for ever." I think that she almost tried to turn her face to him; but be that as it may, she kept her eyes steadily fixed upon the window-pane. "Lily," he said, "it is not that you are hard-hearted,—perhaps not altogether that you do not like me. I think that you believe things against me that are not true." As she heard this she moved her foot angrily upon the carpet. She had almost forgotten M. D., but now he had reminded her of the note. She assured herself that she had never believed anything against him except on evidence that was incontrovertible. But she was not going to speak to him on such a matter as that! It would not become her to accuse him. "Mrs. Arabin tells me that you doubt whether I am in earnest," he said.

Upon hearing this she flashed round upon him almost angrily. "I never said that."

"If you will ask me for any token of earnestness, I will give it you."

"I want no token."

"The best sign of earnestness a man can give generally in such a matter, is to show how ready he is to be married."

"I never said anything about earnestness."

"At the risk of making you angry I will go on, Lily. Of course when you tell me that you will have nothing to say to me, I try to amuse myself"—"Yes; by writing love-letters to M. D.," said Lily to herself.—"What is a poor fellow to do? I tell you fairly that when I leave you I swear to myself that I will make love to the first girl I can see who will listen to me—to twenty, if twenty will let me. I feel I have failed, and it is so I punish myself for my failure." There was something in this which softened her brow, though she did not intend that it should be so; and she turned away again, that he might not see that her brow was softened. "But, Lily, the hope ever comes back again, and then neither the one nor the twenty are of avail,—even to punish me. When I look forward and see what it might be if you were with me, how green it all looks and how lovely, in spite of all the vows I have made, I cannot help coming back again." She was now again near the window, and he had not followed her. As she neither turned towards him nor answered him, he moved from the table near which he was standing on to the rug before the fire, and leaned with both his elbows on the mantelpiece. He could still watch her in the mirror over the fireplace, and could see that she was still seeming to gaze out upon the street. And had he not moved her? I think he had so far moved her now, that she had ceased to think of the woman who had written to her,—that she had ceased to reject him in her heart on the score of such levities as that! If there were M. D.'s, like sunken rocks, in his course, whose fault was it? He was ready enough to steer his bark into the tranquil blue waters, if only she would aid him. I think that all his sins on that score were at this moment forgiven him. He had told her now what to him would be green and beautiful, and she did not find herself able to disbelieve him. She had banished M. D. out of her mind, but in doing so she admitted other reminiscences into it. And then,—was she in a moment to be talked out of the resolution of years; and was she to give up herself, not because she loved, but because the man who talked to her talked so well that he deserved a reward? Was she now to be as light, as foolish, as easy, as in those former days from which she had learned her wisdom? A picture of green lovely things could be delicious to her eyes as to his; but even for such a picture as that the price might be too dear! Of all living men,—of all men living in their present lives,—

she loved best this man who was now waiting for some word of answer to his words, and she did love him dearly; she would have tended him if sick, have supplied him if in want, have mourned for him if dead, with the bitter grief of true affection;—but she could not say to herself that he should be her lord and master, the head of her house, the owner of herself, the ruler of her life. The shipwreck to which she had once come, and the fierce regrets which had thence arisen, had forced her to think too much of these things. "Lily," he said, still facing towards the mirror, "will you not come to me and speak to me?" She turned round, and stood a moment looking at him, and then, having again resolved that it could not be as he wished, she drew near to him. "Certainly I will speak to you, John. Here I am." And she came close to him.

He took both her hands, and looked into her eyes. "Lily, will you be mine?"

"No, dear; it cannot be so."

"Why not, Lily?"

"Because of that other man."

"And is that to be a bar for ever?'

"Yes; for ever."

"Do you still love him?"

"No; no, no!"

"Then why should this be so?"

"I cannot tell, dear. It is so. If you take a young tree and split it, it still lives, perhaps. But it isn't a tree. It is only a fragment."

"Then be my fragment."

"So I will, if it can serve you to give standing ground to such a fragment in some corner of your garden. But I will not have myself planted out in the middle, for people to look at. What there is left would die soon." He still held her hands, and she did not attempt to draw them away. "John," she said, "next to mamma, I love you better than all the world. Indeed I do. I can't be your wife, but you need never be afraid that I shall be more to another than I am to you."

"That will not serve me," he said, grasping both her hands till he almost hurt them, but not knowing that he did so. "That is no good."

"It is all the good that I can do you. Indeed I can do you,—can do no one any good. The trees that the storms have splintered are never of use."

"And is this to be the end of all, Lily?"

"Not of our loving friendship."

"Friendship! I hate the word. I hear some one's step, and I had better leave you. Good-by."

"Good-by, John. Be kinder than that to me as you are going." He turned back for a moment, took her hand, and held it tight against his heart, and then he left her. In the hall he met Mrs. Thorne, but, as she said afterwards, he had been too much knocked about to be able to throw a word to a dog.

To Mrs. Thorne Lily said hardly a word about John Eames, and when her cousin Bernard questioned her about him she was dumb. And in these days she could assume a manner, and express herself with her eyes as well as with her voice, after a fashion, which was apt to silence unwelcome questioners, even though they were as intimate with her as was her cousin Bernard. She had described her feelings more plainly to her lover than she had ever done to any one,—even to her mother; and having done so she meant to be silent on that subject for evermore. But of her settled purpose she did say some word to Emily Dunstable that night. "I do feel," she said, "that I have got the thing settled at last."

"And you have settled it, as you call it, in opposition to the wishes of all your friends?"

"That is true; and yet I have settled it rightly, and I would not for worlds have it unsettled again. There are matters on which friends should not have wishes, or at any rate should not express them."

"Is that meant to be severe to me?"

"No; not to you. I was thinking about mamma, and Bell, and my uncle, and Bernard, who all seem to think that I am to be looked upon as a regular castaway because I am not likely to have a husband of my own. Of course you, in your position, must think a girl a castaway who isn't going to be married?"

"I think that a girl who is going to be married has the best of it."

"And I think a girl who isn't going to be married has the best of it;—that's all. But I feel that the thing is done now, and I am contented. For the last six or eight months there has come up, I know not how, a state of doubt which has made me so wretched that I have done literally nothing. I haven't been able to finish old Mrs. Heard's tippet, literally because people would talk to me about that dearest of all dear fellows, John Eames. And yet all along I have known how it would be,—as well as I do now."

"I cannot understand you, Lily; I can't indeed."

"I can understand myself. I love him so well,—with that intimate, close, familiar affection,—that I could wash his clothes for him to-morrow, out of pure personal regard, and think it no shame. He could not ask me to do a single thing for him,—except the one thing,

—that I would refuse. And I'll go further. I would sooner marry him than any man in the world I ever saw, or, as I believe, that I ever shall see. And yet I am very glad that it is settled."

On the next day Lily Dale went down to the Small House of Allington, and so she passes out of our sight. I can only ask the reader to believe that she was in earnest, and express my own opinion, in this last word that I shall ever write respecting her, that she will live and die as Lily Dale.

CHAPTER LXXVIII.

THE ARABINS RETURN TO BARCHESTER.

In these days Mr. Harding was keeping his bed at the deanery, and most of those who saw him declared that he would never again leave it. The archdeacon had been slow to believe so, because he had still found his father-in-law able to talk to him;—not indeed with energy, but then Mr. Harding had never been energetic on ordinary matters,—but with the same soft cordial interest in things which had ever been customary with him. He had latterly been much interested about Mr. Crawley, and would make both the archdeacon and Mrs. Grantly tell him all that they heard, and what they thought of the case. This of course had been before the all-important news had been received from Mrs. Arabin. Mr. Harding was very anxious, "Firstly," as he said, "for the welfare of the poor man, of whom I cannot bring myself to think ill; and then for the honour of the cloth in Barchester." "We are as liable to have black sheep here as elsewhere," the archdeacon replied. "But, my dear, I do not think that the sheep is black; and we never have had black sheep in Barchester." "Haven't we though?" said the archdeacon, thinking, however, of sheep who were black with a different kind of blackness from this which was now attributed to poor Mr. Crawley,—of a blackness which was not absolute blackness to Mr. Harding's milder eyes. The archdeacon, when he heard his father-in-law talk after this fashion, expressed his opinion that he might live yet for years. He was just the man to linger on, living in bed,—as indeed he had lingered all his life out of bed. But the doctor who attended him thought otherwise, as did also Mrs. Grantly, and as did Mrs. Baxter, and as also did Posy. "Grandpa won't get up any more, will he?" Posy said to Mrs. Baxter. "I hope he will, my dear; and that very soon." "I don't think he will," said

Posy, "because he said he would never see the big fiddle again." "That comes of his being a little melancholy like, my dear," said Mrs. Baxter.

Mrs. Grantly at this time went into Barchester almost every day, and the archdeacon, who was very often in the city, never went there without passing half-an-hour with the old man. These two clergymen, essentially different in their characters and in every detail of conduct, had been so much thrown together by circumstances that the life of each had almost become a part of the life of the other. Although the fact of Mr. Harding's residence at the deanery had of late years thrown him oftener into the society of the dean than that of his other son-in-law, yet his intimacy with the archdeacon had been so much earlier, and his memories of the archdeacon were so much clearer, that he depended almost more upon the rector of Plumstead, who was absent, than he did upon the dean, whom he customarily saw every day. It was not so with his daughters. His Nelly, as he had used to call her, had ever been his favourite, and the circumstances of their joint lives had been such, that they had never been further separated than from one street of Barchester to another,—and that only for the very short period of the married life of Mrs. Arabin's first husband. For all that was soft and tender therefore,—which with Mr. Harding was all in the world that was charming to him,—he looked to his youngest daughter; but for authority and guidance and wisdom, and for information as to what was going on in the world, he had still turned to his son-in-law the archdeacon,—as he had done for nearly forty years. For so long had the archdeacon been potent as a clergyman in the diocese, and throughout the whole duration of such potency his word had been law to Mr. Harding in most of the affairs of life,—a law generally to be obeyed, and if sometimes to be broken, still a law. And now, when all was so nearly over, he would become unhappy if the archdeacon's visits were far between. Dr. Grantly, when he found that this was so, would not allow that they should be far between.

"He puts me so much in mind of my father," the archdeacon said to his wife one day.

"He is not so old as your father was when he died, by many years," said Mrs. Grantly, "and I think one sees that difference."

"Yes;—and therefore I say that he may still live for years. My father, when he took to his bed at last, was manifestly near his death. The wonder with him was that he continued to live so long. Do you not remember how the London doctor was put out because his prophecies were not fulfilled?"

"I remember it well;—as if it were yesterday."

"And in that way there is a great difference. My father, who was physically a much stronger man, did not succumb so easily. But the likeness is in their characters. There is the same mild sweetness, becoming milder and sweeter as they increased in age;—a sweetness that never could believe much evil, but that could believe less, and still less, as the weakness of age came on them. No amount of evidence would induce your father to think that Mr. Crawley stole that money." This was said of course before the telegram had come from Venice.

"As far as that goes I agree with him," said Mrs. Grantly, who had her own reasons for choosing to believe Mr. Crawley to be innocent. If your son, my dear, is to marry a man's daughter, it will be as well that you should at least be able to say that you do not believe that man to be a thief.

"That is neither here nor there," said the archdeacon. "A jury must decide it."

"No jury in Barsetshire shall decide it for me," said Mrs. Grantly.

"I'm sick of Mr. Crawley, and I'm sorry I spoke of him," said the archdeacon. "But look at Mrs. Proudie. You'll agree that she was not the most charming woman in the world."

"She certainly was not," said Mrs. Grantly, who was anxious to encourage her husband, if she could do so without admitting anything which might injure herself afterwards.

"And she was at one time violently insolent to your father. And even the bishop thought to trample upon him. Do you remember the bishop's preaching against your father's chaunting? If I ever forget it!" And the archdeacon slapped his closed fist against his open hand.

"Don't, dear; don't. What is the good of being violent now?"

"Paltry little fool! It will be long enough before such a chaunt as that is heard in any English cathedral again." Then Mrs. Grantly got up and kissed her husband, but he, somewhat negligent of the kiss, went on with his speech. "But your father remembers nothing of it, and if there was a single human being who shed a tear in Barchester for that woman, I believe it was your father. And it was the same with mine. It came to that at last, that I could not bear to speak to him of any shortcoming as to one of his own clergymen. I might as well have pricked him with a penknife. And yet they say men become heartless and unfeeling as they grow old!"

"Some do, I suppose."

"Yes; the heartless and unfeeling do. As the bodily strength fails and the power of control becomes lessened, the natural aptitude of

the man pronounces itself more clearly. I take it that that is it. Had Mrs. Proudie lived to be a hundred and fifty, she would have spoken spiteful lies on her deathbed." Then Mrs. Grantly told herself that her husband, should he live to be a hundred and fifty, would still be expressing his horror of Mrs. Proudie,—even on his deathbed.

As soon as the letter from Mrs. Arabin had reached Plumstead, the archdeacon and his wife arranged that they would both go together to the deanery. There were the double tidings to be told,—those of Mr. Crawley's assured innocence, and those also of Mrs. Arabin's instant return. And as they went together various ideas were passing through their minds in reference to the marriage of their son with Grace Crawley. They were both now reconciled to it. Mrs. Grantly had long ceased to feel any opposition to it, even though she had not seen Grace; and the archdeacon was prepared to give way. Had he not promised that in a certain case he would give way, and had not that case now come to pass? He had no wish to go back from his word. But he had a difficulty in this,—that he liked to make all the affairs of his life matter for enjoyment, almost for triumph; but how was he to be triumphant over this marriage, or how even was he to enjoy it, seeing that he had opposed it so bitterly? Those posters, though they were now pulled down, had been up on all barn ends and walls, patent—alas, too patent—to all the world of Barsetshire! "What will Mr. Crawley do now, do you suppose?" said Mrs. Grantly.

"What will he do?"

"Yes; must he go on at Hogglestock?"

"What else?" said the archdeacon.

"It is a pity something could not be done for him after all he has undergone. How on earth can he be expected to live there with a wife and family, and no private means?" To this the archdeacon made no answer. Mrs. Grantly had spoken almost immediately upon their quitting Plumstead, and the silence was continued till the carriage had entered the suburbs of the city. Then Mrs. Grantly spoke again, asking a question, with some internal trepidation, which, however, she managed to hide from her husband. "When poor papa does go, what shall you do about St. Ewold's?" Now, St. Ewold's was a rural parish lying about two miles out of Barchester, the living of which was in the gift of the archdeacon, and to which the archdeacon had presented his father-in-law, under certain circumstances, which need not be repeated in this last chronicle of Barsetshire. Have they not been written in other chronicles? "When poor papa does go, what will you do about St. Ewold's?" said Mrs. Grantly, trembling inwardly. A

word too much might, as she well knew, settle the question against Mr. Crawley for ever. But were she to postpone the word till too late, the question would be settled as fatally.

"I haven't thought about it," he said sharply. "I don't like thinking of such things while the incumbent is still living." Oh, archdeacon, archdeacon! unless that other chronicle be a false chronicle, how hast thou forgotten thyself and thy past life! "Particularly not, when that incumbent is your father," said the archdeacon. Mrs. Grantly said nothing more about St. Ewold's. She would have said as much as she had intended to say if she had succeeded in making the archdeacon understand that St. Ewold's would be a very nice refuge for Mr. Crawley after all the miseries which he had endured at Hogglestock.

They learned as they entered the deanery that Mrs. Baxter had already heard of Mrs. Arabin's return. "O yes, ma'am. Mr. Harding got a letter hisself, and I got another,—separate; both from Venice, ma'am. But when master is to come, nobody seems to know." Mrs. Baxter knew that the dean had gone to Jerusalem, and was inclined to think that from such distant bournes there was no return for any traveller. The east is always further than the west in the estimation of the Mrs. Baxters of the world. Had the dean gone to Canada, she would have thought that he might come back to-morrow. But still there was the news to be told of Mr. Crawley, and there was also joy to be expressed at the sudden coming back of the much-wished-for mistress of the deanery.

"It's so good of you to come both together," said Mr. Harding.

"We thought we should be too many for you," said the archdeacon.

"Too many! O dear, no. I like to have people by me; and as for voices, and noise, and all that, the more the better. But I am weak. I'm weak in my legs. I don't think I shall ever stand again."

"Yes, you will," said the archdeacon.

"We have brought you good news," said Mrs. Grantly.

"Is it not good news that Nelly will be home this week? You can't understand what a joy it is to me. I used to think sometimes, at night, that I should never see her again. That she would come back in time was all I have had to wish for." He was lying on his back, and as he spoke he pressed his withered hands together above the bedclothes. They could not begin immediately to tell him of Mr. Crawley, but as soon as his mind had turned itself away from the thoughts of his absent daughter, Mrs. Grantly again reverted to her news.

"We have come to tell you about Mr. Crawley, papa."

"What about him?"

"He is quite innocent."

"I knew it, my dear. I always said so. Did I not always say so, archdeacon?"

"Indeed you did. I'll give you that credit."

"And is it all found out?" asked Mr. Harding.

"As far as he is concerned, everything is found out," said Mrs. Grantly. "Eleanor gave him the cheque herself."

"Nelly gave it to him?"

"Yes, papa. The dean meant her to give him fifty pounds. But it seems she got to be soft of heart and made it seventy. She had the cheque by her, and put it into the envelope with the notes."

"Some of Stringer's people seem to have stolen the cheque from Mr. Soames," said the archdeacon.

"O dear; I hope not."

"Somebody must have stolen it, papa."

"I had hoped not, Susan," said Mr. Harding. Both the archdeacon and Mrs. Grantly knew that it was useless to argue with him on such a point, and so they let that go.

Then they came to discuss Mr. Crawley's present position, and Mr. Harding ventured to ask a question or two as to Grace's chance of marriage. He did not often interfere in the family arrangements of his son-in-law,—and never did so when those family arrangements were concerned with high matters. He had hardly opened his mouth in reference to the marriage of that august lady who was now the Marchioness of Hartletop. And of the Lady Anne, the wife of the Rev. Charles Grantly, who was always prodigiously civil to him, speaking to him very loud, as though he were deaf because he was old, and bringing him cheap presents from London of which he did not take much heed,—of her he rarely said a word, or of her children, to either of his daughters. But now his grandson, Henry Grantly, was going to marry a girl of whom he felt that he might speak without impropriety. "I suppose it will be a match; won't it, my dears?"

"Not a doubt about it," said Mrs. Grantly. Mr. Harding looked at his son-in-law, but his son-in-law said nothing. The archdeacon did not even frown,—but only moved himself a little uneasily in his chair.

"Dear, dear! What a comfort that must be," said the old man.

"I have not seen her yet," said Mrs. Grantly; "but the archdeacon declares that she is all the graces rolled into one."

"I never said anything half so absurd," replied the archdeacon.

"But he really is quite in love with her, papa," said Mrs. Grantly. "He confessed to me that he gave her a kiss, and he only saw her once for five minutes."

"I should like to give her a kiss," said Mr. Harding.

"So you shall, papa, and I'll bring her here on purpose. As soon as ever the thing is settled, we mean to ask her to Plumstead."

"Do you though? How nice! How happy Henry will be!"

"And if she comes—and of course she will—I'll lose no time in bringing her over to you. Nelly must see her of course."

As they were leaving the room Mr. Harding called the archdeacon back, and taking him by the hand, spoke one word to him in a whisper. "I don't like to interfere," he said; "but might not Mr. Crawley have St. Ewold's?" The archdeacon took up the old man's hand and kissed it. Then he followed his wife out of the room, without making any answer to Mr. Harding's question.

Three days after this Mrs. Arabin reached the deanery, and the joy at her return was very great. "My dear, I have been sick for you," said Mr. Harding.

"Oh, papa, I ought not to have gone."

"Nay, my dear; do not say that. Would it make me happy that you should be a prisoner here for ever? It was only when I seemed to get so weak that I thought about it. I felt that it must be near when they bade me not to go to the cathedral any more."

"If I had been here, I could have gone with you, papa."

"It is better as it is. I know now that I was not fit for it. When your sister came to me, I never thought of remonstrating. I knew then that I had seen it for the last time."

"We need not say that yet, papa."

"I did think that when you came home we might crawl there together some warm morning. I did think of that for a time. But it will never be so, dear. I shall never see anything now that I do not see from here,—and not that for long. Do not cry, Nelly. I have nothing to regret, nothing to make me unhappy. I know how poor and weak has been my life; but I know how rich and strong is that other life. Do not cry, Nelly,—not till I am gone; and then not beyond measure. Why should any one weep for those who go away full of years,—and full of hope?"

On the day but one following the dean also reached his home. The final arrangements of his tour, as well as those of his wife, had been made to depend on Mr. Crawley's trial; for he also had been hurried

back by John Eames's visit to Florence. "I should have come at once," he said to his wife, "when they wrote to ask me whether Crawley had taken the cheque from me, had anybody then told me that he was in actual trouble; but I had no idea then that they were charging him with theft."

"As far as I can learn, they never really suspected him until after your answer had come. They had been quite sure that your answer would be in the affirmative."

"What he must have endured it is impossible to conceive. I shall go out to him to-morrow."

"Would he not come to us?" said Mrs. Arabin.

"I doubt it. I will ask him, of course. I will ask them all here. This about Henry and the girl may make a difference. He has resigned the living, and some of the palace people are doing the duty."

"But he can have it again?"

"Oh, yes; he can have it again. For the matter of that, I need simply give him back his letter. Only he is so odd,—so unlike other people! And he has tried to live there, and has failed; and is now in debt. I wonder whether Grantly would give him St. Ewold's?"

"I wish he would. But you must ask him. I should not dare."

As to the matter of the cheque, the dean acknowledged to his wife at last that he had some recollection of her having told him that she had made the sum of money up to seventy pounds. "I don't feel certain of it now; but I think you may have done so." "I am quite sure I could not have done it without telling you," she replied. "At any rate you said nothing of the cheque," pleaded the dean. "I don't suppose I did," said Mrs. Arabin. "I thought that cheques were like any other money; but I shall know better for the future."

On the following morning the dean rode over to Hogglestock, and as he drew near to the house of his old friend, his spirits flagged,—for to tell the truth, he dreaded the meeting. Since the day on which he had brought Mr. Crawley from a curacy in Cornwall into the diocese of Barchester, his friend had been a trouble to him rather than a joy. The trouble had been a trouble of spirit altogether,—not at all of pocket. He would willingly have picked the Crawleys out from the pecuniary mud into which they were ever falling, time after time, had it been possible. For, though the dean was hardly to be called a rich man, his lines had fallen to him not only in pleasant places, but in easy circumstances;—and Mr. Crawley's embarrassments, though overwhelming to him, were not so great as to have been heavy to the dean. But in striving to do this he had always failed, had always suffered, and

had generally been rebuked. Crawley would attempt to argue with him as to the improper allotment of Church endowments,—declaring that he did not do so with any reference to his own circumstances, but simply because the subject was one naturally interesting to clergymen. And this he would do, as he was waving off with his hand offers of immediate assistance which were indispensable. Then there had been scenes between the dean and Mrs. Crawley,—terribly painful,—and which had taken place in direct disobedience to the husband's positive injunctions. "Sir," he had once said to the dean, "I request that nothing may pass from your hands to the hands of my wife." "Tush, tush," the dean had answered. "I will have no tushing or pshawing on such a matter. A man's wife is his very own, the breath of his nostril, the blood of his heart, the rib from his body. It is for me to rule my wife, and I tell you that I will not have it." After that the gifts had come from the hands of Mrs. Arabin;—and then again, after that, in the direst hour of his need, Crawley had himself come and taken money from the dean's hands! The interview had been so painful that Arabin would hardly have been able to count the money or to know of what it had consisted, had he taken the notes and cheque out of the envelope in which his wife had put them. Since that day the two had not met each other, and since that day these new troubles had come. Arabin as yet knew but little of the manner in which they had been borne, except that Crawley had felt himself compelled to resign the living of Hogglestock. He knew nothing of Mrs. Proudie's persecution, except what he gathered from the fact of the clerical commission of which he had been informed; but he could imagine that Mrs. Proudie would not lie easy on her bed while a clergyman was doing duty almost under her nose, who was guilty of the double offence of being accused of a theft, and of having been put into his living by the dean. The dean, therefore, as he rode on, pictured to himself his old friend in a terrible condition. And it might be that even now that condition would hardly have been improved. He was no longer suspected of being a thief; but he could have no money in his pocket; and it might well be that his sufferings would have made him almost mad.

The dean also got down and left his horse at a farm-yard,—as Grantly had done with his carriage; and walked on first to the school. He heard voices inside, but could not distinguish from them whether Mr. Crawley was there or not. Slowly he opened the door, and looking round saw that Jane Crawley was in the ascendant. Jane did not know him at once, but told him when he had introduced himself that her father had gone down to Hoggle End. He had started two hours ago,

but it was impossible to say when he might be back. "He sometimes stays all day long with the brickmakers," said Jane. Her mother was at home, and she would take the dean into the house. As she said this she told him that her father was sometimes better and sometimes worse. "But he has never been so very, very bad, since Henry Grantly and mamma's cousin came and told us about the cheque." That word Henry Grantly made the dean understand that there might yet be a ray of sunshine among the Crawleys.

"There is papa," said Jane, as they got to the gate. Then they waited for a few minutes till Mr. Crawley came up, very hot, wiping the sweat from his forehead.

"Crawley," said the dean, "I cannot tell you how glad I am to see you, and how rejoiced I am that this accusation has fallen off from you."

"Verily the news came in time, Arabin," said the other; "but it was a narrow pinch—a narrow pinch. Will you not enter, and see my wife?"

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